

Department of Justice

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District of Maryland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TWENTY-FIRST MEMBER OF MS-13 CONVICTED

OF RACKETEERING CONSPIRACY, MURDER CONSPIRACY AND MURDER

Defendant Participated in Planning the Murder of One Girl and the Shooting of Another

GREENBELT, Md. – A federal jury convicted Israel Ernesto Palacios, a/k/a “Homie,” 31, of Silver Spring, Md., today of conspiracy to participate in a racketeering enterprise, conspiracy to commit murder in aid of racketeering, murder in aid of racketeering, use of a firearm in relation to a crime of violence and murder resulting from use of a gun during a crime of violence, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to testimony presented at the four week trial, Palacios was a member of the Langley Park Salvatruchos (LPS) clique of MS-13. At some time prior to Oct. 25, 2004, Palacios met with another MS-13 member to discuss and investigate rumors that Nancy Diaz was associating with a rival gang. Witnesses testified that shortly thereafter, Palacios, James Guillen and other MS-13 members attended a meeting of the LPS clique in Prince George’s County, Md., in which clique leaders discussed plans to kill Diaz. On Oct. 25, 2004, Guillen drove two other MS-13 members, Diaz and another juvenile female in his car, and dropped them off at the George Washington Cemetery in Adelphi, Md. According to testimony, two MS-13 members shot and killed Diaz, shot the other girl in the face and stabbed her twice in the chest to attempt to make sure she was dead, and then left the scene. On Aug. 25, 2005, Palacios and Guillen were arrested in connection with the racketeering, murder and firearms charges.

Palacios faces a maximum sentence of life in prison and a \$250,000 fine. U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow scheduled Palacios' sentencing for Nov. 10, 2008. Palacios remains in federal custody.

Guillen, a/k/a "Toro," 22, of Hyattsville, Md., pleaded guilty after a jury was selected for his federal trial, to conspiracy to participate in racketeering enterprise activities and was sentenced on Jan. 11, 2008, to 262 months in prison.

To date, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland has charged 50 gang members with various federal offenses, with 30 defendants charged in this RICO conspiracy case. Twenty-one MS-13 gang members have been convicted thus far in this RICO conspiracy case.

"By working together to prosecute Israel Palacios and many other MS-13 gang members using federal racketeering laws, law enforcement agencies are making a substantial impact on violent crime in Maryland," said U.S. Attorney Rosenstein.

"We wish to send a consistent message that when people choose to join a violent gang, they will be held accountable for its actions-no excuses," said Acting Special Agent-in-Charge Sheree L. Mixell of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

Acting Assistant Attorney General Friedrich and U.S. Attorney Rosenstein praised the RAGE Task Force; the ATF; the Prince George's County Police Department; the FBI; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the Montgomery County Department of Police; the Maryland National Capital Park Police; and the Maryland State Police. Acting Assistant Attorney General Friedrich and the U.S. Attorney also recognized Prince George's County State's Attorney Glenn F. Ivey for the assistance that he and his office provided.

Furthermore, Acting Assistant Attorney General Friedrich and U.S. Attorney Rosenstein commended Assistant U.S. Attorney Chan Park, and Trial Attorney David Jaffe, a prosecutor for the Criminal Division's Gang Squad, who are prosecuting the case.

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